

**This Week In Congress**

*September 20, 2004*

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

**Meeting with Kansans at the State Fair**

Each year since being elected to Congress, I have joined Kansans at the annual State Fair in Hutchinson. The fair gives me an opportunity to meet with people to discuss the issues they are facing. Sunday marked the final day of the 2004 Kansas State Fair and provided an excellent opportunity for friends and families to gather and celebrate a unique Kansas experience.

This year, I spent four days at the fair. During that time, I was able to join Kansas Farm Bureau for their annual Leadership Breakfast. While there, I was discussed the importance of having drought assistance for agriculture producers that have been hit hard by drought. I spent much of the rest of my time at the fair, walking the grounds and talking with Kansans one-on-one, hearing their concerns and receiving their advice. Throughout the fair, I was able to meet with hundreds of Kansans and truly appreciated the opportunity.

### **Drought Assistance One Step Closer to Reality**

On Tuesday, the Senate passed a package of emergency aid for agriculture producers who have suffered drought, frost, flooding and other farm-related disasters. This year was especially difficult for our farmers, and I was encouraged by the Senate's action.

Congressman Tom Osborne (R-NE), Congressman Earl Pomeroy (D-ND) and I have led a bipartisan group of lawmakers to see that a similar aid package passes in the House. Farmers need this assistance, and I will work hard to see that they receive it. Since 2001, farmers have suffered from multi-year losses that reach into the billions of dollars. This year alone, K-State estimates that the Kansas wheat crop will total more than \$150 million in losses with \$82 million coming from northwest Kansas alone.

### **Working to Protect Small Businesses and Volunteers**

Also on Tuesday, the House passed legislation designed to curb the rise of frivolous lawsuits. Over the years, I have seen firsthand what happens when people abuse the system. The problem of frivolous lawsuits has particularly hit small businesses hard.

The Lawsuit Abuse Reduction Act, will crack down on frivolous lawsuits by imposing fines on those who file the lawsuits, and will allow victims to recoup legal fees and court costs. The House also approved legislation that would provide liability protection to those that assist volunteer fire departments, non-profit athletic leagues and volunteer pilots for good samaritan flights. This is important because Kansas has a large number of groups and individuals who volunteer their time and resources to serve our rural communities. These generous volunteers should be encouraged to help others, without the risk of being sued.

### **Honoring World War II Veteran, Clarence Weyand of Canton**

On Thursday, I presented Clarence Weyand of Canton with medals from his service in World War II. Mr. Weyand and I were joined by members of the American Legion and American Legion Riders, along with Mr. Weyand's wife Mildred, and their sons, Allen of Texas and Terry of Canton. I was pleased to correct this oversight and finally present Mr. Weyand with the medals that he earned and deserves.

During World War II, Mr. Weyand fought in the Battle of the Bulge as a tank gunner. During the battle, his tank became disabled, and he and his crewmates became separated from their unit. The soldiers were then taken in by a local farmer and were housed and fed until they could be smuggled back to their unit several days later. In order to avoid German forces, the soldiers were forced to hide in haystacks during the day and travel only at night. Upon returning, they discovered that the Army had already listed them as 'missing in action.'

Mr. Weyand's story is an example of why these men are called the 'Greatest Generation' and exemplifies what it means to be a part of that heroic group.

### **Traveling in Kansas**

### **Meade**

On Sunday, I was on hand for the dedication of the new Meade District Hospital. The old hospital was demolished, and the land now serves as a parking lot for the new facility. The

dedication of the hospital is good news for the many people in and around the Meade community and is a positive step for rural health care.

### **Marion**

On Thursday, I joined the Marion High School Senior Government class for an Interactive-TV discussion with students from Marion, Peabody and Centre. The discussion centered around my job as a United States Congressman, the responsibilities that are involved, and the unique challenges of covering such a large district, and the importance of getting involved in our democracy at a young age. Class instructor Rex Ostmeyer and principal Ken Arnhold also joined us, as did school superintendent Lee Leiker.

### **Hays**

On Friday, I joined approximately 100 respiratory therapists from around the state for the Kansas Respiratory Care Seminar in Hays. The seminar gave me an opportunity to discuss the challenges that rural health care is facing in Kansas and to receive feedback over how that is affecting respiratory therapists.

### **Plainville**

Also on Friday, I went home to Plainville and spoke to the high school senior government class. The class, taught by Jeff Kohl, provided an excellent opportunity to meet with students to discuss civic duty and responsibility. After I left the high school, I joined my parents at the Plainville Senior Center for lunch. While at the center, I was able to visit with locals about their needs and what I can do to assist. They provided excellent feedback that I will be able to take back to Washington, D.C. with me during the remaining weeks of this year's session.

### **In the Office**

This week a number of Kansans were in the office for tours of the Capitol and for meetings in the office. In for tours were James and Marilyn Robb, Scott Seirer and Bob Prozman of Salina.

In the office for meetings were Orlin Wagner with the VFW from Wichita, who was in to discuss the Veteran Administration's legislative agenda, and Sue Peachey and her daughter Kelly

Thomas of Pratt, who were in to discuss crop insurance issues. Jim Edwards of Topeka was in from the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) along with K-State Adjunct Professor Mickey Bogart of Manhattan, financial consultant F. Tim Witsman of Wichita and Deputy Director Lou Cicchinello of Wichita. The KASB group was in the office to discuss what they are working on and to see if technical assistance may be provided through federal programs.

Also in the office this week was the Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality Association. Al Ward with Taco Casa from Topeka, Bill Rowe with Willie C's Cafe & Bar from Wichita, Hugh O'Reilly with McDonald's from Emporia, Sabrina Collins with Hays Lundy Properties from Hays, Ron and Julie Hein and Ron Seeber with Hein Law Firm from Topeka, Michael Phipps, Connie Byars and Fred Sobrino with the Wichita Airport Hilton and Conference Center from Wichita, Dennis Carpenter with the Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality Association from Wichita and Ron Oberg with the Red Coach Inn from Wichita. The group was in the office to discuss health care, overtime regulations, business meal deductibility, legal reform and the minimum wage.

Very truly yours,

Jerry